

Faith Basics Decided
Acts 15:22-35

There are basics in the faith, last week we looked at some very basic things that the early church settled on. Today we will talk about the gospel as what was decided and what needs to be lived out from those “decided things.”

At the end of the service last week I asked you two questions and asked you to write out a response, remember? Those questions were:

- 1) What are the basics of the Christian faith for you?
- 2) What do you hold sacred that must be followed?

And then I asked you to consider those two questions in light of a statement/question that I hoped would guide your responses. That statement was this: And something that I believe we must then ask ourselves, would Jesus hold to the same basics that I would hold to?

What did you come up with? Would anyone like to share briefly their answers to those two questions? I will give you my answer to those questions, but later.

The basics are revealed in Acts 13 by Paul. Paul says that the basics are – God chose the ancestral Jews to reveal himself to. And through prophets he spoke of himself and then in the person of Jesus God revealed himself. Jesus was that revelation first to the Jew and then to the whole world. Jesus was condemned, as was foretold; Jesus was nailed to a tree and then laid in a tomb. But, God raised him from the dead. Many witnesses saw him alive – walking and talking. This is the good news that we bring to you. And then they taught about Jesus, his character, his love, his love for us.

No rules but one. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and spirit, and love your neighbor as yourself.”

²² Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers. ²³ With them they sent the following letter:

The apostles and elders, your brothers,
To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia:
Greetings.

²⁴ We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. ²⁵ So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— ²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. ²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.
Farewell.

³⁰ The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. ³¹ The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. ³² Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers. ³³ After spending some time there, they were sent off by the brothers with the blessing of peace to return to those who

had sent them.^{a 35} But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.¹

It is interesting that the apostles and the elders sent a letter with a delegation. Words with flesh and blood witness. Judas and Silas are the bonded agents of the church, at least for this purpose. In many ways Paul and Barnabas are representatives of the gentile churches themselves. Judas and Silas are the agents of the Christian church in Jerusalem.

The church accepted James' suggestion exactly as he had proposed it. James had significant weight in the Jerusalem church being the brother of Jesus. But it was not just what he said, in many ways he paraphrased the conversation of the whole church on the topic of what is needed to come into Christ. The whole church gathered and gave input into the important problem. And James spoke out of what was said and what was said was spoken unanimously!

There was a position taken by the people. A position that was firmly taken by all present, but it was not just their position, their choice, their preference . . . in verse 28 we read these important words – “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us also.”

This action was bathed in the truth of God. It was not now just a decision by a group of men from some place out there somewhere, it was a God thing, a God work. A truth, a very work that would be put in operation so that faith could grow and flourish. See God knew what was needed in these new gentile churches. He knew their hearts, he knew their struggles, he knew what he wanted to accomplish in their lives and he knew how to get it done. Yes God works with us. But, more importantly God works. Our scripture goes on to say that there was joyous acceptance of the letter and that Paul and Barnabas stayed on for awhile and taught and strengthened the church. But the most important thing is found in verse 28, the Holy Spirit confirmed the work, and established the work. It was a God thing. And the work of the faith is still a God thing.

We all have gifts and we should use them. Some cook, some teach, some administrate, some organize, some clean, some preach, some greet, and the list goes on, but the maker of the list of gifts and the giver of the gifts is God. It is God's responsibility to establish. It is our responsibility to respond to the established work that is made and outlined by God.

What ever Christian faith basics you come up with must center of Jesus. God put Jesus at the center of life. We must put Jesus in the center of our lives as well. We must put Jesus at the center of our church, our community, and our world.

And you may be asking how, right about now. The how is done simply by praying, listening, responding and then walking faithfully with Jesus.

At First Christian Church we have decided that the basics of the faith are Christ-likeness. We have also decided that we will work out that faith, our faith by a purpose statement. That statement is on the bulletin insert at the top. Please locate that statement if you will.

It says, “We are called by Christ to care and to serve.” It is what we strive to do in all the areas of our ministry. And it is our prayer that we do this with grace and love.

Would you please say the purpose statement out loud with me.

¹*The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1984 (Ac 15:22-35). Zondervan: Grand Rapids

Now that we have said it together, let us strive to do it together as we share its words with our flesh and blood lives to those who need the caring of Christ. And they are not far from us, they are our brothers, our sisters, our mothers and fathers, and our neighbors and our friends. Anyone we come into contact needs to feel Christ. And we are the way that Christ choose to get others to feel his touch.

The Faith basic is simple, it is Jesus. Go and be Jesus to those around you.

Will you please pray with me.